



**Department of  
Education &  
Workforce**

# Ohio Legislative Children's Caucus

## **PATRICK HICKMAN**

Ohio's Attendance Advisor  
Office of Whole Child Supports  
Department of Education and Workforce

March 2024





# What is Chronic Absence?

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ESSA: Chronic absence is defined as missing 10 percent or more of school for **any** reason.



Chronic absence is **different** from truancy (unexcused absences only) or average daily attendance (how many students show up to school each day).



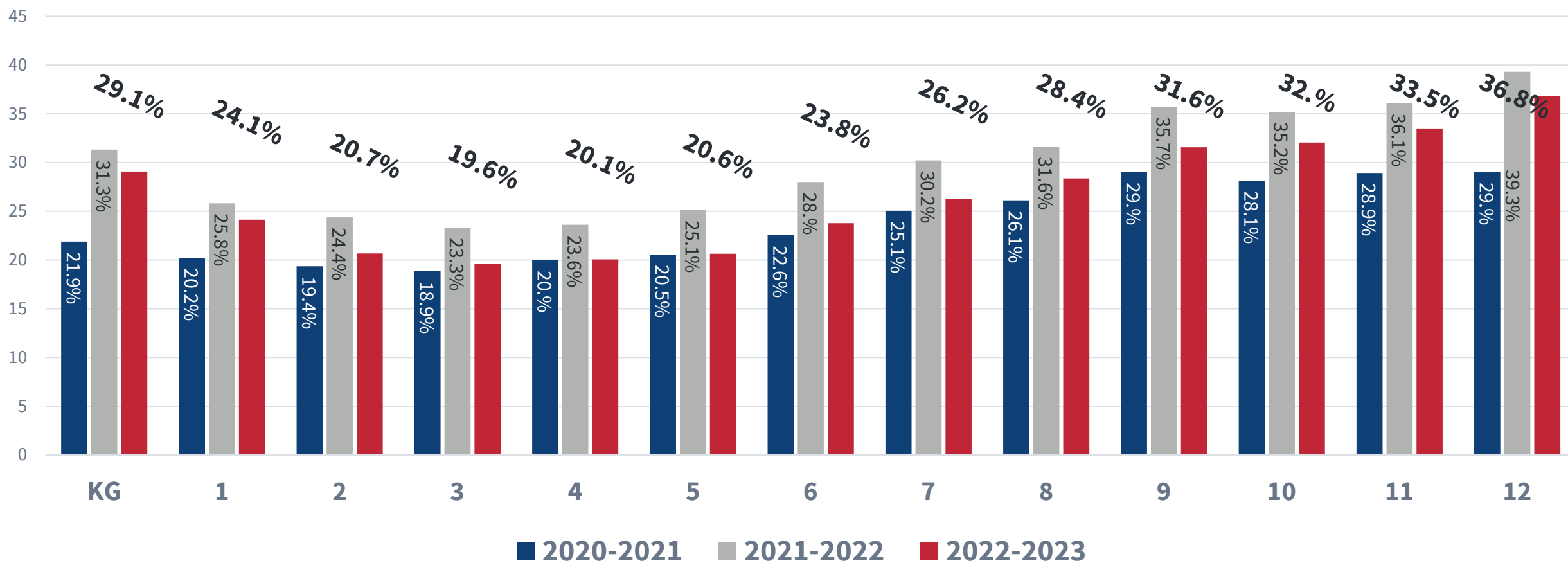
# Why Focus on Attendance Data?

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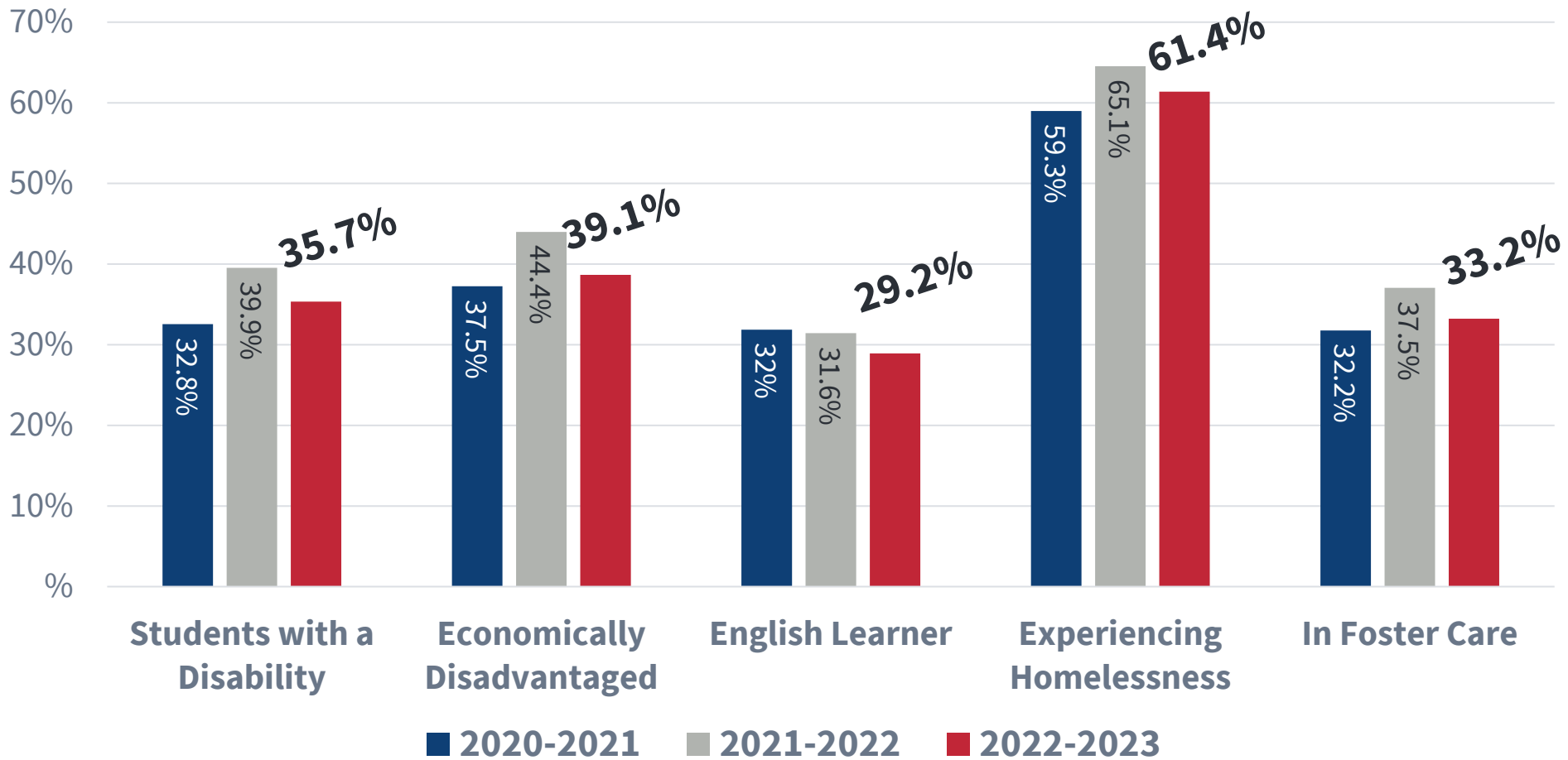
A student in grades K-3 who were never chronically absent was nearly 7x more likely to read proficiently

High school students who were never chronically absent were 9x more likely to graduate on time

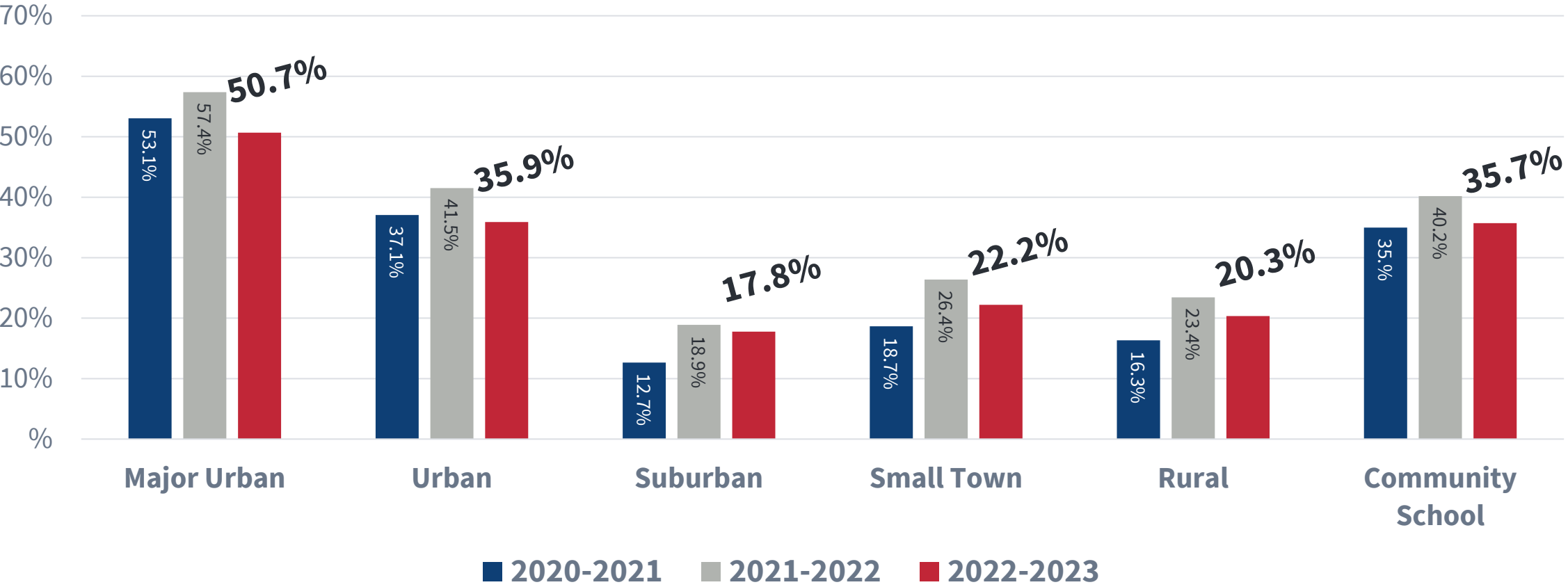
# Chronic Absence By Grade Level

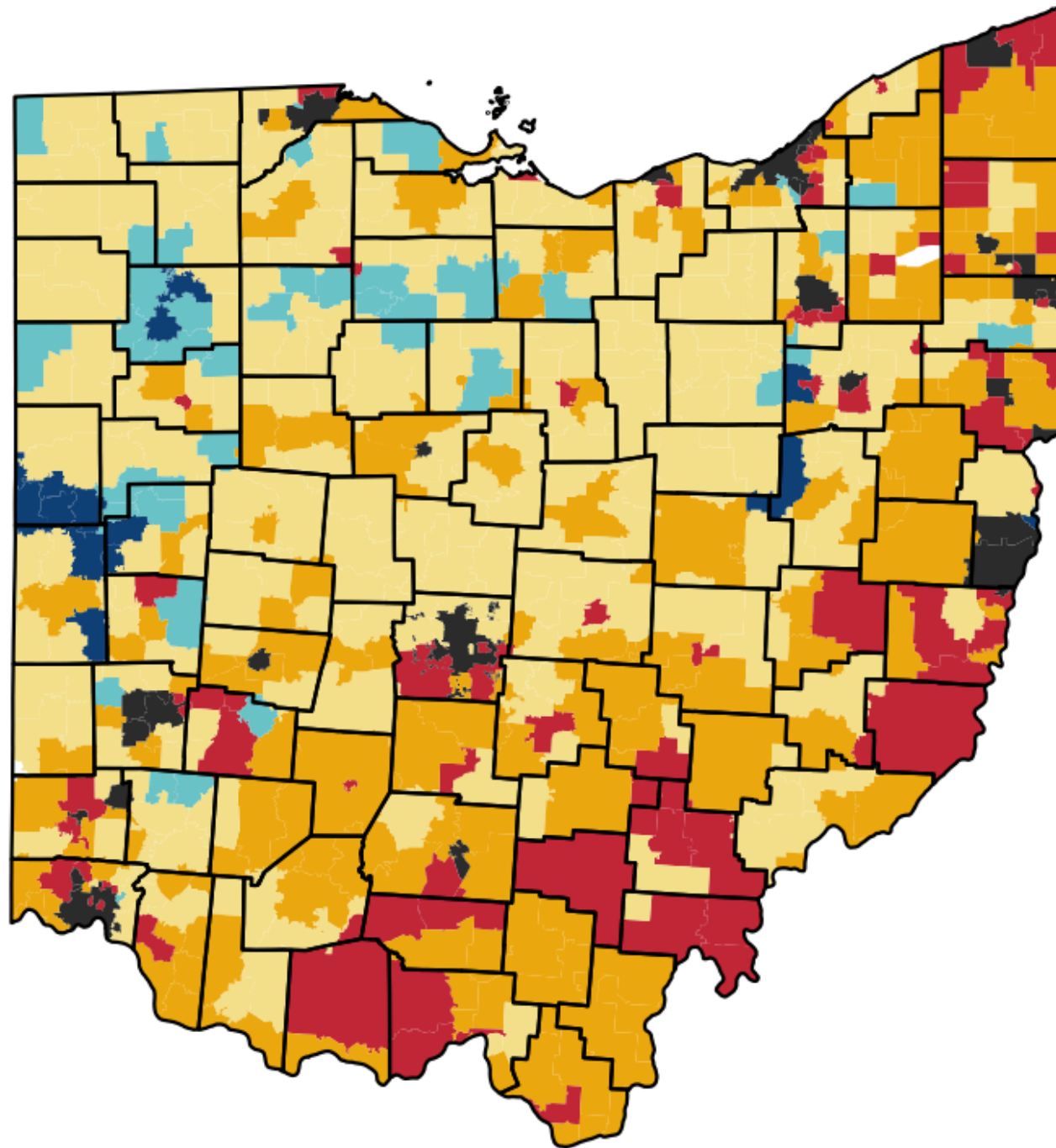


# Chronic Absence – Students At-risk

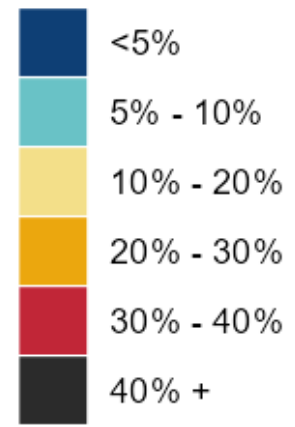


# Chronic Absence in Ohio by Typology





Chronic Absenteeism  
SY22-23





# Absences Add Up!

September					October					November					December					January				
M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F
													X											
							X				X													
		X	X					X				X			X	X					X	X	X	
February					March					April					May					June				
M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F
				X						X														
X	X													X		X						X	X	
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©Attendance Works

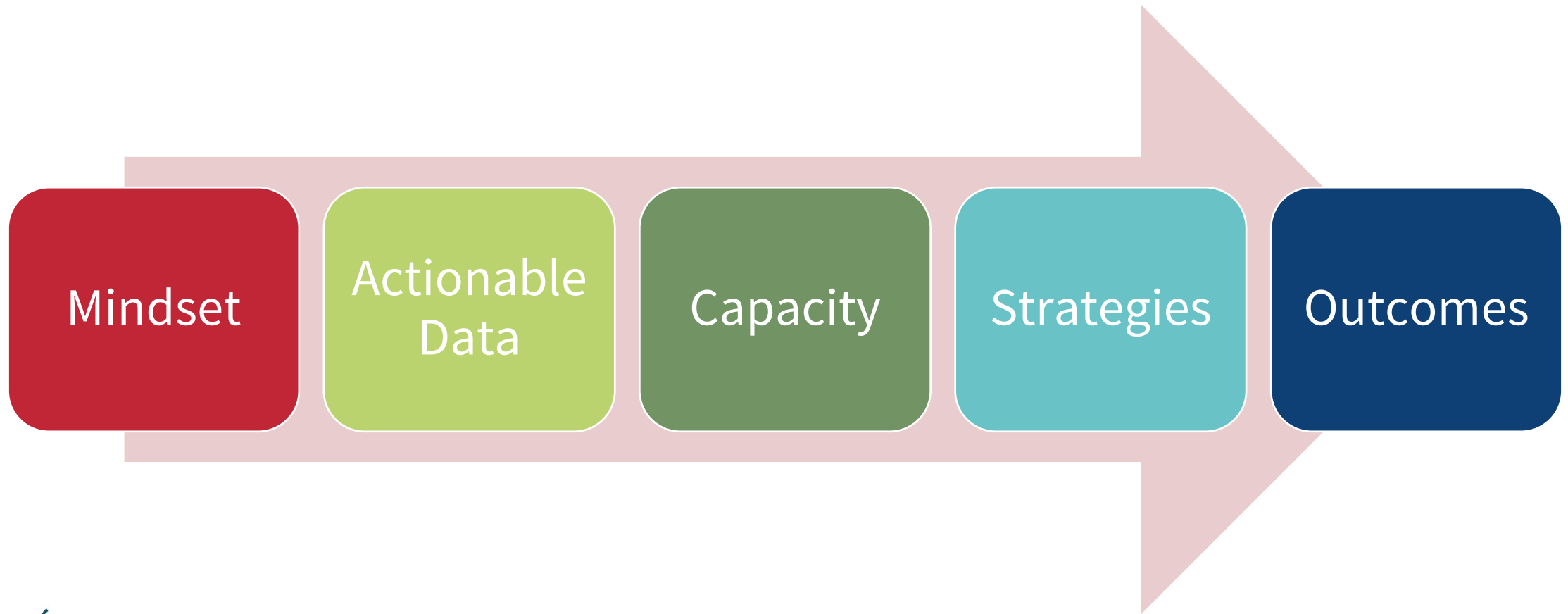
Missing just 2 or 3 days a month can lead to chronic absence.

10% of the school year = 18 days of absence

This translates to almost one month of missed learning

# Pathway For Change

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# Attendance Task Force

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“Teachers need to make a strong effort to connect. It helps us notice that we would be missed or knowing it matters if we're not there.”

- Student

“Families often receive a letter that threatens truancy charges before a team approach to problem-solve is taken or a root cause is discovered. This puts families and schools against each other right out of the gate.”

- Parent

View the [full Task Force report](#) here





# The Taskforce recommends five big ideas to boost attendance and lower chronic absenteeism

**1**

## **Attendance is a Team Sport**

Working together, build awareness and galvanize statewide support for role of attendance to student success in academics, careers and life

**2**

## **Strengthen the Team**

Foster engagement, build trust and belonging, and address local challenges with students, families and educators

**3**

## **Create a Rewarding and Relevant Team Experience**

Cultivate engaging and relevant learning environments so students want to attend at all Ohio schools

**4**

## **Support the Players and Coaches**

Adjust systems and resources to support schools and districts in their attendance work

**5**

## **Adjust the Playbook**

Work with policymakers to inform comprehensive policy changes to support student attendance

# Legislative Questions?

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Jennie Stump

Chief, Policy and Legislative Affairs

Direct Line: 614-466-5734

[Jennifer.Stump@education.ohio.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Stump@education.ohio.gov)

# What Can We Do To Address These?

## Barriers

- Chronic and acute illness
- Family responsibilities or home situation
- Trauma
- Poor transportation
- Housing and food insecurity
- Inequitable access to needed services
- System involvement
- Lack of predictable schedules for learning
- Lack of access to tech

## Aversion

- Struggling academically and/or behaviorally
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Social and peer challenges
- Anxiety
- Biased disciplinary and suspension practices
- Undiagnosed disability and/or disability accommodations
- Parents had negative educational experiences

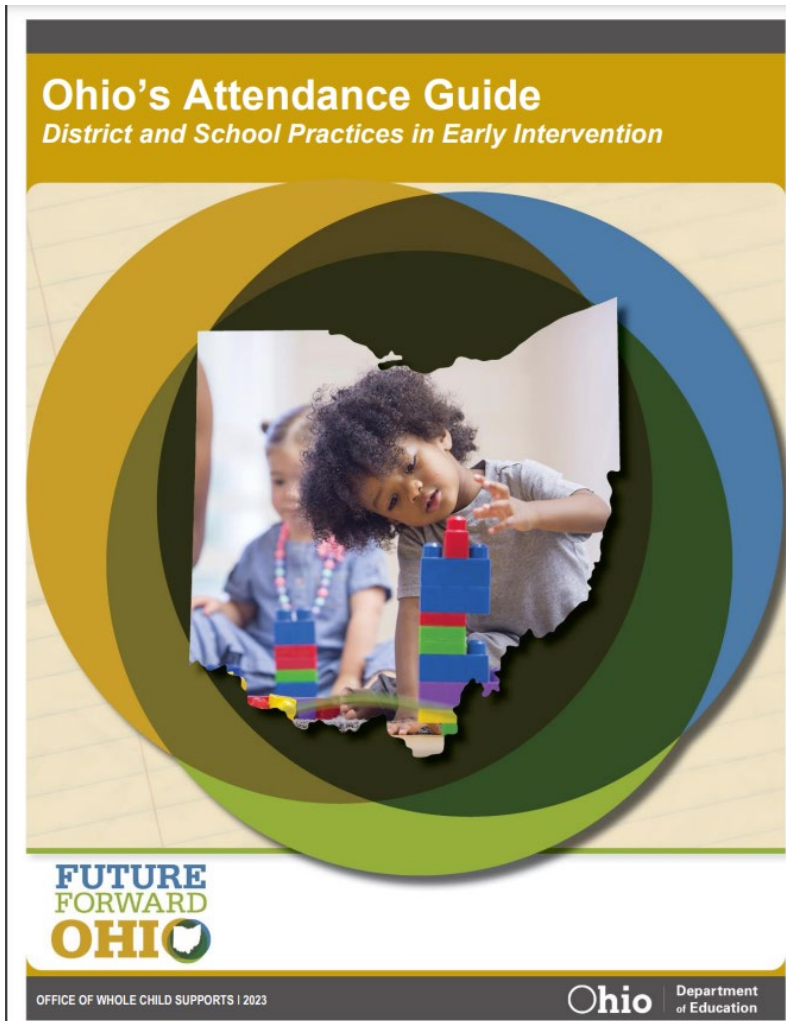
## Disengagement

- Lack of challenging, culturally responsive instruction
- Bored
- No meaningful relationships to adults in the school (especially given staff shortages)
- Lack of enrichment opportunities
- Lack of academic and behavioral support
- Failure to earn credits
- Drawn to low-wage job vs. being in high school

## Misconceptions

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning
- Lose track and underestimate TOTAL absences
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades
- Suspensions don't count as absence

# Ohio's Attendance Guide



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# QUESTIONS?

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Patrick Hickman

Ohio's Attendance Advisor

[Patrick.Hickman@education.ohio.gov](mailto:Patrick.Hickman@education.ohio.gov)



Department of  
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# 2024 STATE OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE IN OHIO

**March 18, 2024**

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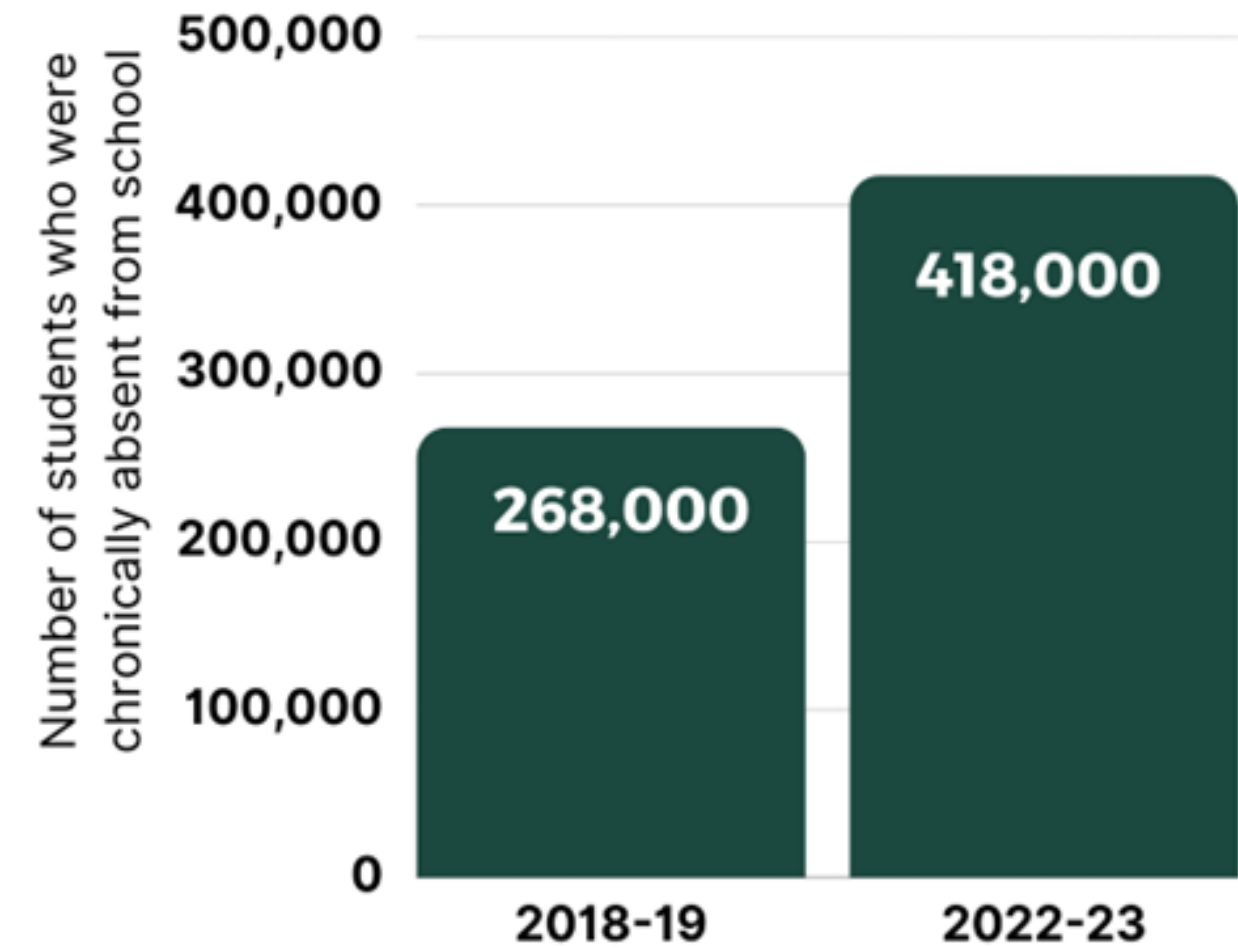
Presentation for the Legislative Children's Caucus

## PARENT PERSPECTIVE

“As a Family Ambassador, I call families daily to check and connect with them around their well-being. Many of the contacted families stated their child was currently suspended or recently returned to school from suspension. I found it alarming that through randomly calling parents just to check on their well-being, resulted in discovering that many students were suspended. Moreover, my family would soon be impacted by the school’s zero-tolerance policy. My son, a junior, enrolled in college credit plus classes at the community college, an honor student his entire high school tenure, never been suspended, and very active in extracurricular activities was suspended for ten days for “horse-playing” after school before band practice.”

-Parent of High-School Student

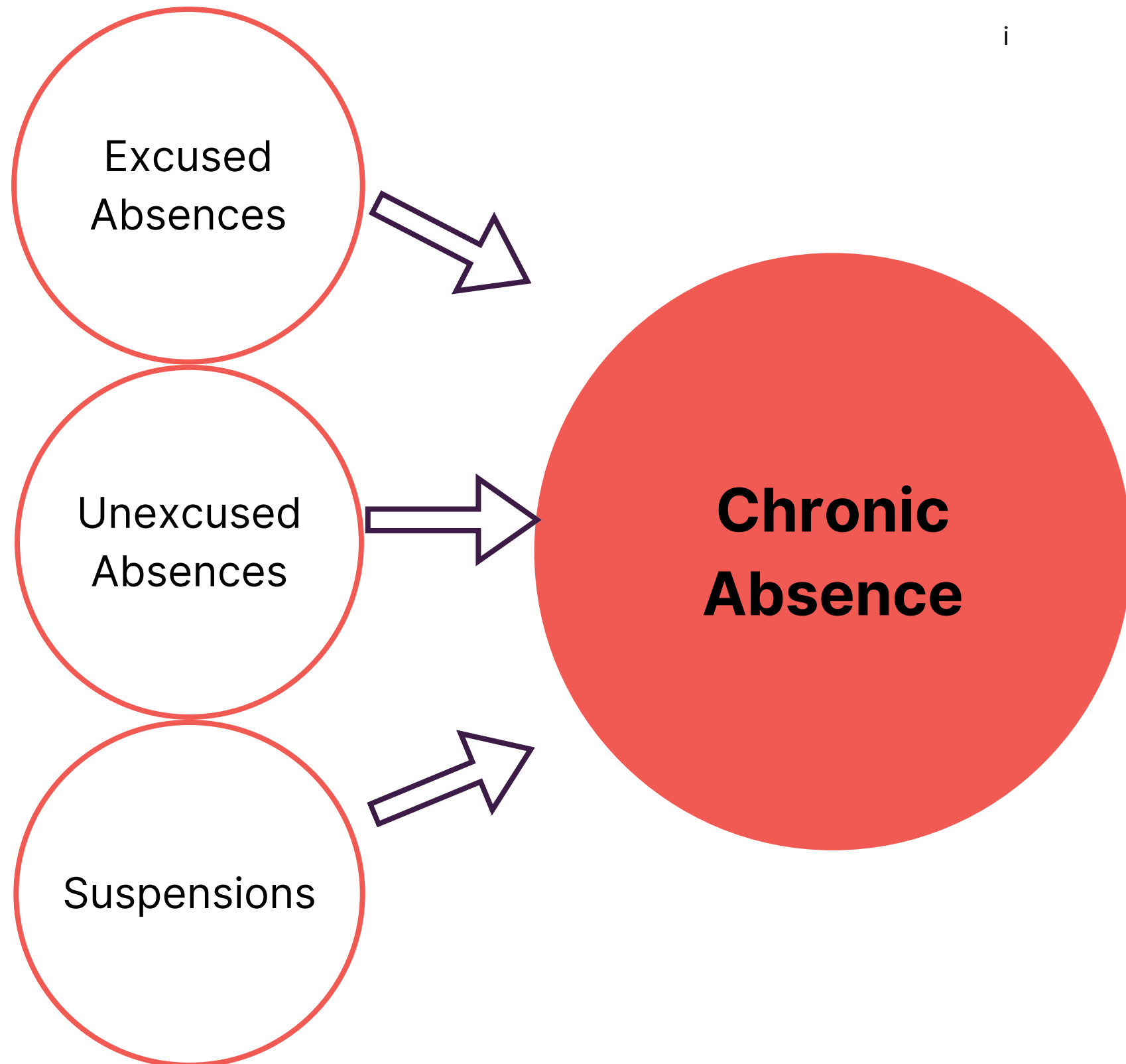
### Chronic Absenteeism is on the rise



Ohio Department of Education and Workforce data

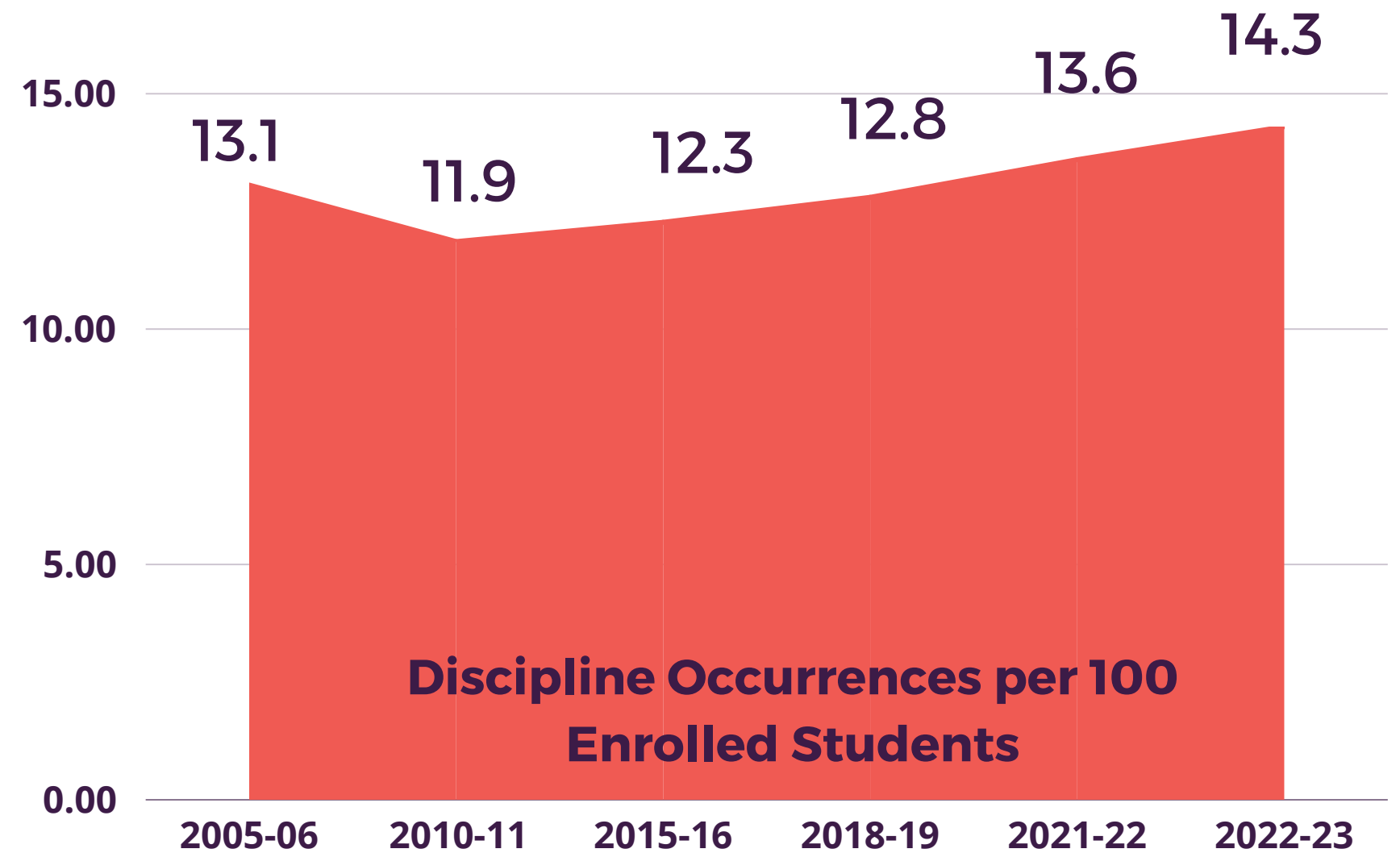
Chronic absence is defined as missing 10% of school or more, and can mean as little as missing 2-3 days per month. Out-of-school suspensions, for example, are counted as unexcused absences for students, contributing to the state’s high absenteeism rates.

## EXCLUSIONARY SCHOOL DISCIPLINE CONTRIBUTES TO OHIO'S HIGH CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM



## EXCLUSIONARY SCHOOL DISCIPLINE PRACTICES ARE ON THE RISE.

Out-of-School Suspensions and Expulsions are considered exclusionary school discipline because they exclude students from necessary learning time.



Data from the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Student Report Card. 2019-20 and 2020-21 were excluded because extended remote learning affected data. 2005-06 and 2010-11 data were added for reference.

# SCHOOL DISCIPLINE HAS DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACTS

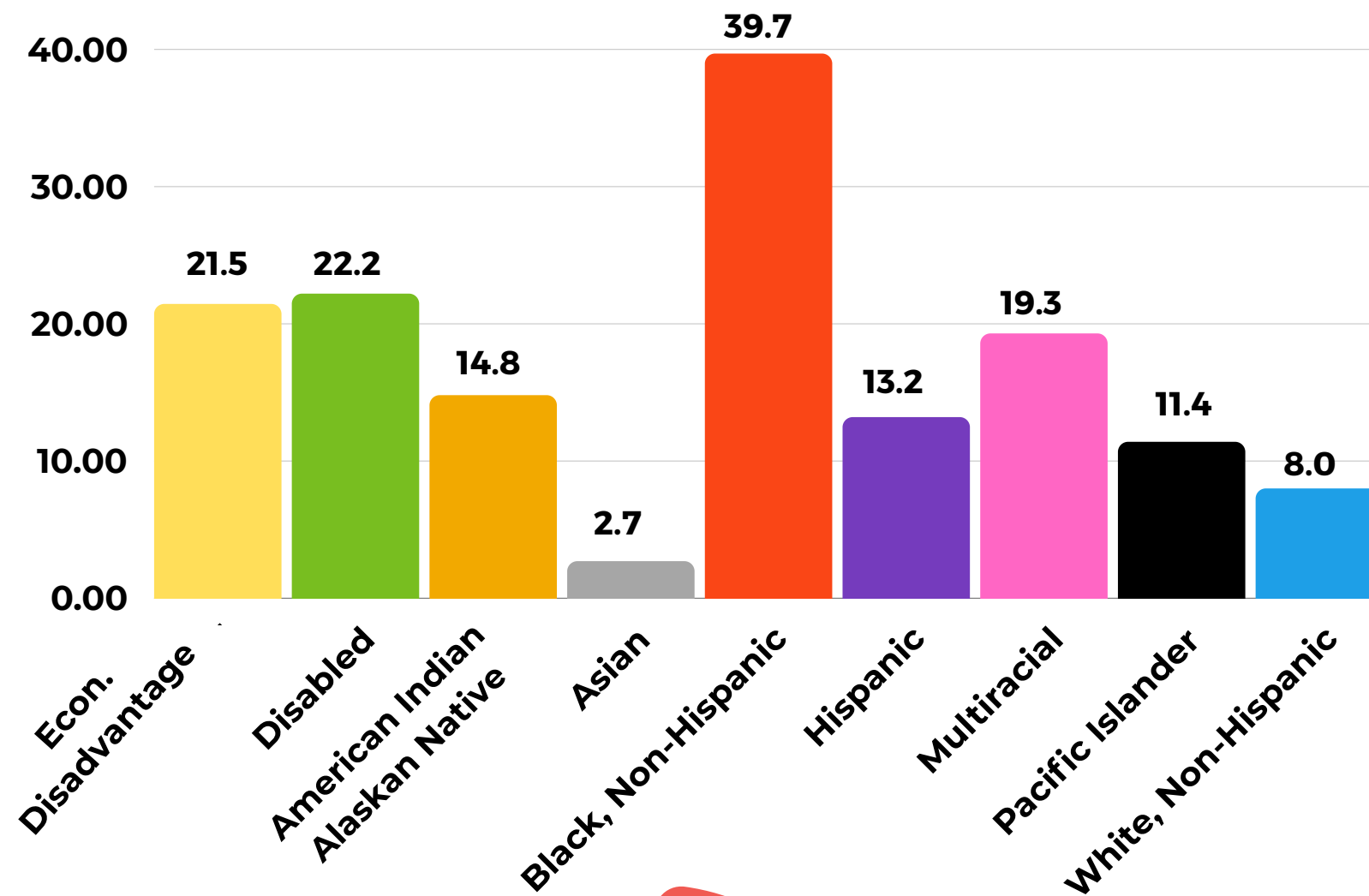
**4.3x**

Black male students were 4.3x more likely than white male students to be suspended or expelled.

**6x**

Black female students were 6x more likely than white female students to be suspended or expelled.

**Discipline Occurrences per 100 Students in 2022-2023**



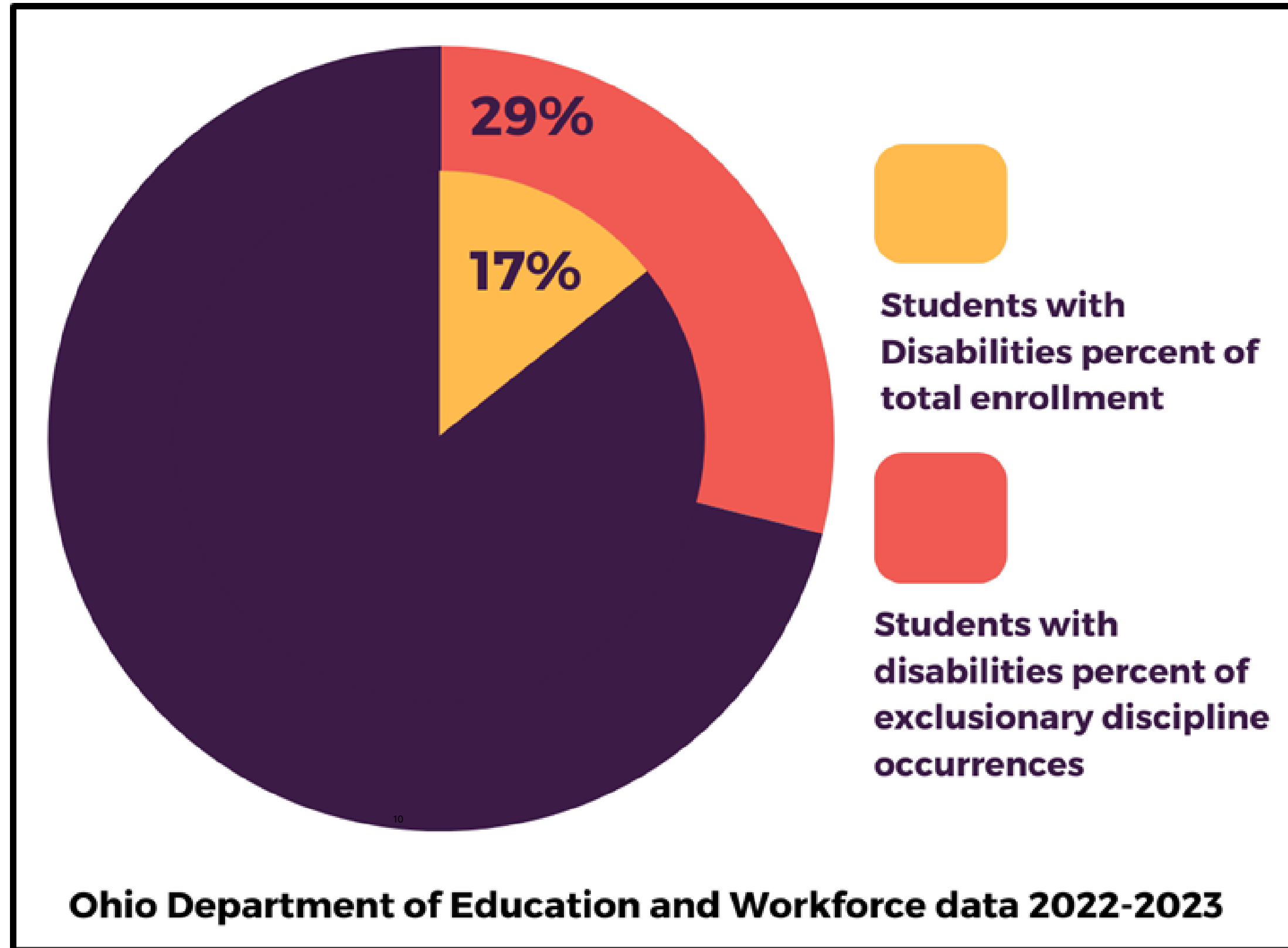
## Disparities also persist across socioeconomic status.

In 2022-2023 school year, there were 174,000 total suspension or expulsion occurrences of students who qualify as economically disadvantaged, compared to only 35,000 of students who do not qualify as economically disadvantaged.

**81%**

Percent of expulsions of students who qualify as economically disadvantaged

# ***Disparities in Access to Educational Opportunity: Students with Disabilities***

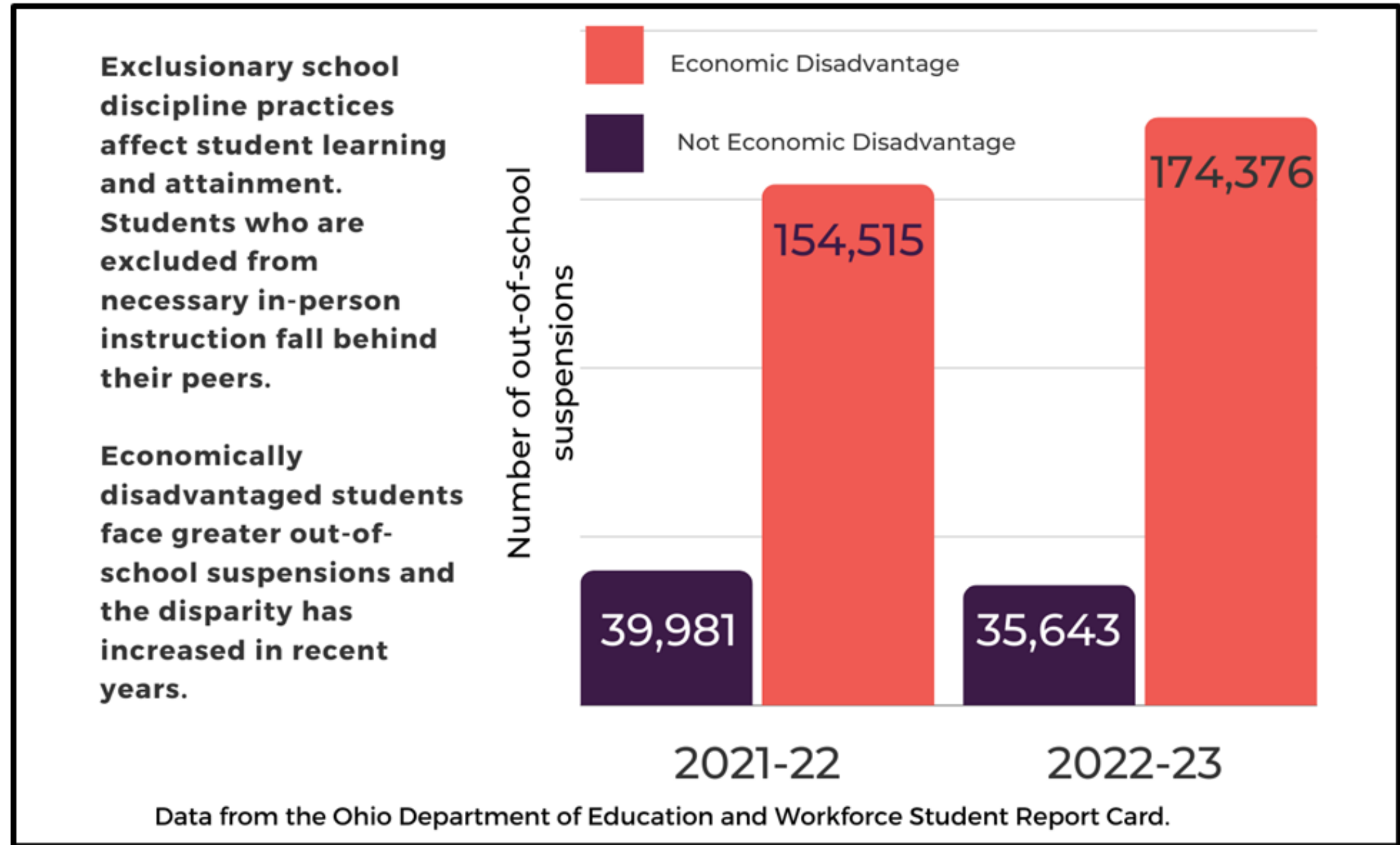


## EDUCATOR PERSPECTIVE:

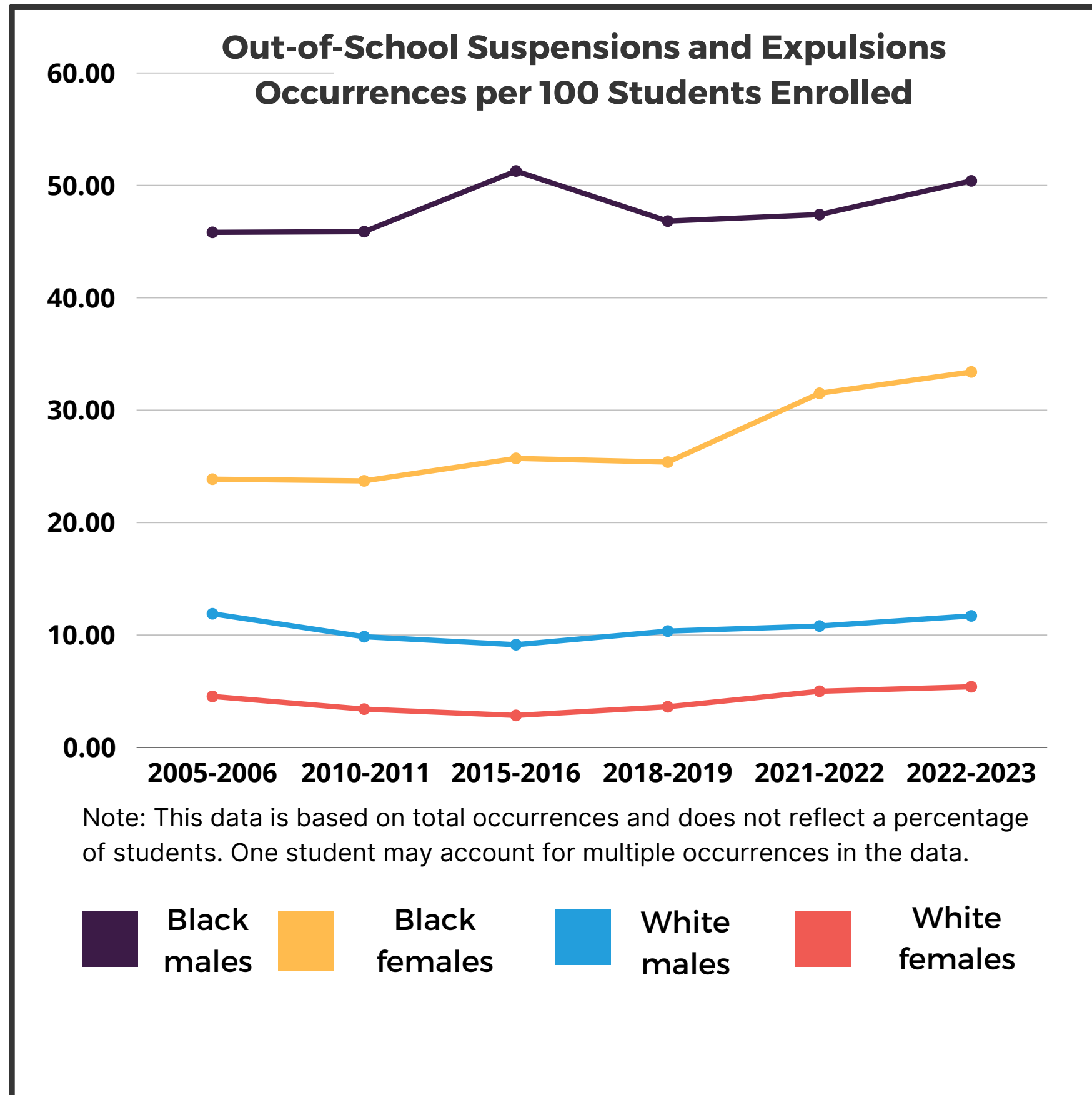
“Many school districts are understaffed, especially in terms of the support staff that can help provide those restorative practices—intervention specialists, behavior specialists, school psychologists, counselors, ESL teachers, paraprofessionals, aides, social workers, tutors, and parent volunteers...Class sizes have a direct impact on the amount of disruptive behaviors that occur. Our school building had a significant reduction in discipline referrals when only half the amount of students were in the school building (due to the hybrid learning model). Students that were “frequent fliers” in our restorative practice system in the 2019-2020 school year were hardly ever pulled out of the classroom due to disruptive behavior in the 2020-2021 school year (when only half the students attended in-person each day), as the teacher was able to implement restorative practices in the classroom.”

-Veteran Public School Interventionist

## Disparities in Access to Educational Opportunity: Poverty & Economic Disadvantage



# Disparities in Access to Educational Opportunity: Students who are Black

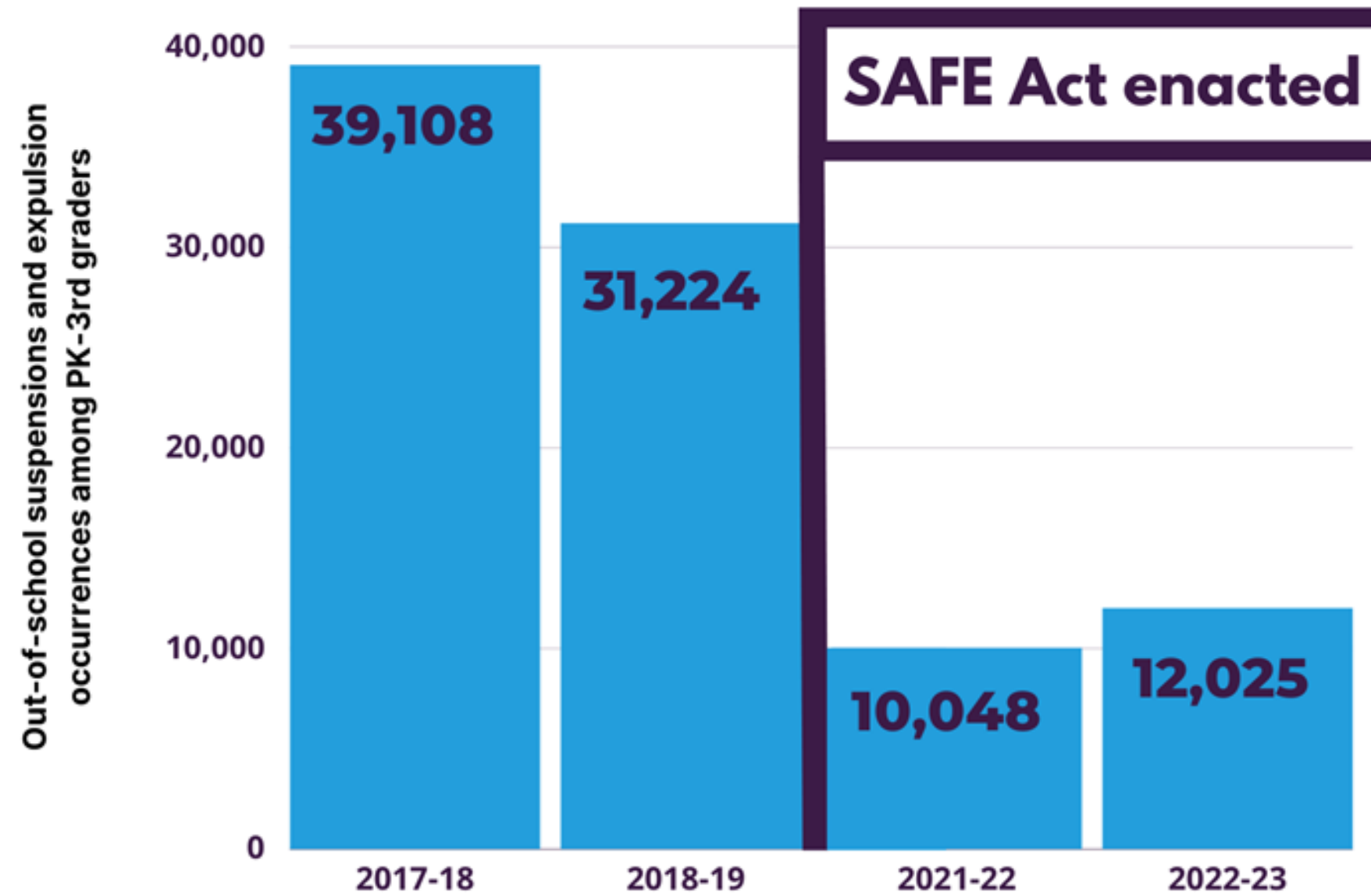


## STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

“Exclusionary discipline...measures most directly affect minority students, creating pipelines that prepare them for jail cells rather than classrooms. As someone who grew up in a low-income community and a community of primarily immigrants, I experienced this lack of opportunity for change. While I believe that discipline is necessary, the disciplinary practices used in most schools seem to impose life sentences rather than provide opportunities for students to transform their lives. I had to search for opportunities for myself due to disinvestment in my community and education. Zero-tolerance policies hinder opportunities for students, as these policies are predominantly used in low-income communities.”

-High-School Student

**EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE HAS DECLINED FOR PK-3RD GRADERS SINCE NEW POLICIES WERE ENACTED IN THE “THE SUPPORTING ALTERNATIVES FOR FAIR EDUCATION” (SAFE) ACT. HOWEVER, THE FULL INTENT OF THE ACT HAS YET TO BE FULLY REALIZED.**



Data from the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Student Report Card. 2019-20 and 2020-21 were excluded because extended remote learning affected data.



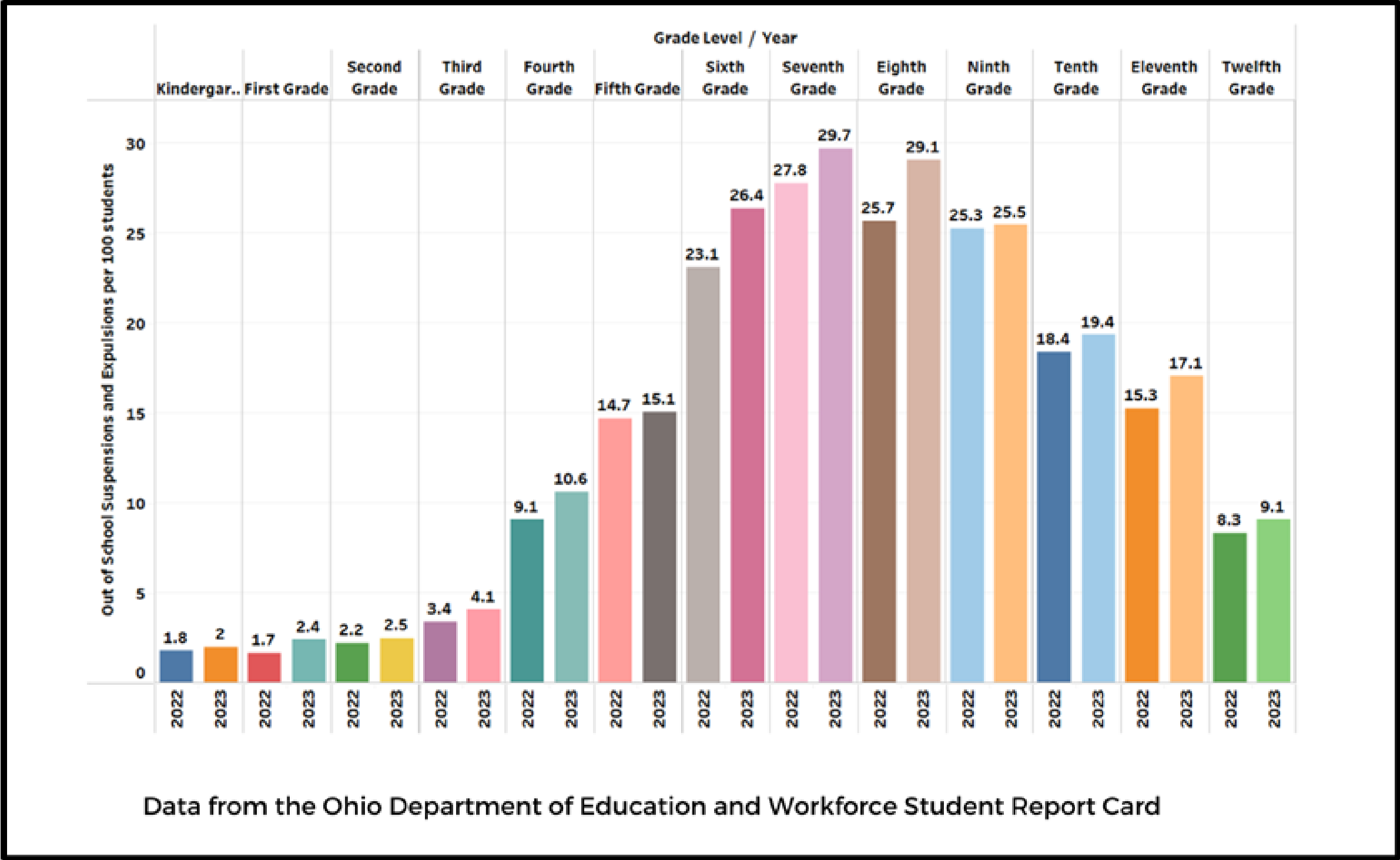
# Exclusionary discipline occurrences were highest among middle school students.

While the SAFE Act focused on young children, middle school is the time when students are most likely to experience exclusionary discipline.

## EDUCATOR PERSPECTIVE:

“I don't like the number of suspensions we have at the Middle School. We need other options for counseling. We contract with a behavioral health service but they are limited and their personnel is spread thin.”

-Superintendent



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### EDUCATOR PERSPECTIVE

“We need the funds to hire trained people that can come into the school and pull these students to help them learn these skills and strategies to do restorative justice practices. We need the support in all areas to make the changes at an earlier age to prevent them from entering the prison system. I have been trained on restorative justice multiple times and even facilitated meetings between students and it does work IF it can be done consistently with a facilitator who understands the entire situation, is trauma informed, and can jump right in.”

-Middle School Teacher

1

#### **Expand the SAFE Act, investigate violations, and provide funding**

Expanding the SAFE Act provisions to apply to more students would prevent the worst impacts of a zero tolerance mandate by protecting children from unnecessary exclusionary discipline. The SAFE Act and any expansion must be accompanied by significant funding for our schools to invest in alternative approaches and continue to prioritize classroom management.

2

#### **Support educators with adequate funding**

Educators must be empowered with adequate resources, both in terms of time and space, to offer students the support they need to thrive. Continue to fully fund our state's schools through the Fair School Funding Plan.

3

#### **Engage the community, including parents and caregivers, teachers, and students**

Hold listening sessions and focus groups with school administrators, teachers, parents and caregivers, and students, to better understand school discipline.

4

#### **Address student needs through community learning center investments and supports**

Improve the health of students and their families by dedicating state funding to expand access to school-based and community-connected health care.

5

#### **Embed restorative practices within a PBIS Framework**

Policymakers must understand the value of these time-intensive practices and ensure that districts have sufficient resources to embed time for them into the staff master schedule.

6

#### **Implement evidence-based social-emotional learning programs**

Evidence-based social emotional learning helps students develop critical life skills, achieve their goals, and be informed, active citizens.

# Positive Alternatives

## EDUCATOR PERSPECTIVE

“Restorative justice as a practice has been around for a while and does work if you have the extra resources and people trained to help facilitate these conversations. They must continue working with those students not just once until a situation is deescalated, but multiple times, to keep reiterating and practicing those strategies.”

- Middle School Teacher

## THE RESTORATIVE PRACTICE MODEL



## SMALLER CLASSES

“When one very disruptive student is gone, my 29 other kids now have a chance to focus on their education. To me, it comes down to class sizes. It is way harder to handle and correct small behaviors, like disruption or inappropriate behavior...when you have 30 students in one classroom.”

- Middle School Teacher



## PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Parents involved with the Central Ohio Parent Leadership Training Institute are deeply invested in creating positive school climates at their children's schools. A group hosted a Teacher Appreciation Night at their local school to build meaningful connections between parents and educators. Parent leadership and initiative are critical to creating school environments where students thrive.